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"HOME, SWEET HOME."

BY REV. L. H. SHUCK, OF N. C.

MY SOLDIER FRIEND: When I remember that you have left behind the comforts of home and the society of loved ones, to defend our homes and firesides from a cruel enemy, I cannot but call you *friend*. You have the warm regard of all true Christians and patriots. I hope you will listen to a few thoughts from one who loves your soul, and who would rejoice to see it safe in the hands of Jesus, who died to save it from everlasting death. The word *home* recalls to your mind many sweet and delightful recollections. You have, no doubt, often wished this distressing war to end, that you might return to your home once more. You have learned now that, "be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." In such times of reflections you have formed many good resolutions. You may have been guilty of profane swearing, and you have resolved to abandon the wicked practice, if you should be spared to return home. You may have been intemperate, and you have determined never again to pain the dear ones at home by the sinful and immoderate use of ardent spirits. In a word, you

have resolved to lead a better life after this war, and to avoid everything calculated to disturb the enjoyments of home. Amid your daily hardships and the dangers of the battle-field, it is sweet to know that there is one place where you are remembered and loved. Are you a father? Then be assured that the wife and little ones are anxiously watching for your return. The vacant seat at the table reminds them constantly of the absent husband and father.— Have you a mother there?— No wonder, then, you love to think of home. Night and morning, as she thinks of her absent boy, she prays to God to protect him, and to spare his precious life. And, while in the daily discharge of her domestic duties, the tears that glisten in her eye declare, more loudly than words, that her thoughts are far away with her dear beloved boy. Such thoughts have endeared home to you more than ever before, and you long for the time to come when our country shall secure her independence, when our enemies shall be driven from the land, and you shall be permitted to lay down your arms and return home, to you, the dearest spot of all the earth. Now, if an earthly home be so dear, far dearer and more valuable is that home offered to you in Christ. Jesus has died upon the cross for sinners. He offers in himself a home of safety, rest, love and eternal happiness, to all who will believe in Him. Home is a place of *safety*. When the storm rises, and the thunders roll, and the lightings flash, the children forsake their play and gather around their mother's knees; the ploughman leaves the field, and all seek

the protection of home until the storm has passed.— There is a place of greater *safety* in Christ. "God is angry with the wicked every day." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "All we, like sheep, have gone astray." Jesus has, however, "become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." He is now the refuge of the soul from the storms of divine vengeance. Though a poor lost and ruined sinner, if you are found in Christ, God will, for His sake, forgive, sanctify and save you. *He alone* can save you. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Fly to Jesus for safety. Confess and forsake your sins, believe in Him, and you shall be saved.— *Jesus is the home of the soul.* Home is a place of rest. The laborer, toiling in the heat and burden of the day, thinks of the sweet rest he will enjoy at night. The soldier loves to think of the rest that remains for him at home when the war is over.— Jesus alone can give true rest to the soul. The peace that passeth all understanding belongs only to the Christian. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked." "The wicked is like the troubled sea, continually casting up mire and dirt." Men have sought for rest out of Christ, but have never found it. Some have sought it in the pursuit of wealth, but its golden key failed to disclose the much coveted treasure. Some have sought it in earthly fame and renown, but all the evergreen fame that human glory could bestow have failed to fill the aching void within their hearts. Others have sought it in the giddy round of pleasure, but its fascinating and seductive

charms could not relieve the famine of the soul.— From the golden treasures of wealth, from the bloody battle-fields of conquerors, and from the halls of gayety and pleasure, comes the sad testimony, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Believe me, my dear friend, when I tell you there is no true, solid peace and satisfaction out of Christ. The soul, panting after an immortality of bliss, cannot be satisfied with the perishing objects of this earth. Its aspirations teach us that it has a higher, purer and more exalted destiny. The true Christian is the only happy man on earth. Noah’s dove wandered hither and thither, but found no place for the sole of her foot, and she returned to the ark. You may go from one object to another in search of rest, but you will not find it until your soul reposes on Jesus. When He speaks forgiveness to the weeping penitent, He gives rest from the burden of sin, from the guilt of conscience, from the threatenings of God’s broken law, and from the terrors of the fiery judgment. Here is rest. *Jesus is the home of the soul.*

“O cease my wandering soul,
On restless wings to roam,
All this wide world to either pole,
Has not for Thee a home.
Behold the Ark of God,
Behold the open door,
O haste to gain that blest abode,
And rove my soul no more.”

Home is the place of true affection. You will be loved there, even if all others forsake you. When

adversity comes upon you, and your summer friends desert you, you can still turn to one place where you are loved, and that place is home. But the love that Jesus offers you, in himself, is superior to all earthly love. He has shown it in coming to this earth to be subjected to a life of shame and persecution, in being despised and rejected of men, and in the bleeding sacrifice on Calvary. Who can doubt His love? But His love is especially tender and touching to those who love Him. It is said to be even greater than a mother's love. Perhaps the strongest love on earth is that of the mother. Who can sound the depths of a mother's love? I see it in the tears that drop upon the coffin as she lays her little babe in the grave. I see it in the burning anguish of her heart as she weeps over the conduct of her wayward boy. I see it in ten thousand acts of kindness and affection which she performs, to sweeten the pilgrimage of life. Can there be greater love than this? Yes, Jesus will love you more than a mother. The prophet Isaiah tells us that the mother may forget her tender offspring, but Jesus will not forget you. O, what love! O, the depths of that amazing love that can be extended to a wretch like me! His love is ever present with us. When friends forsake, Jesus is near. He will never leave you nor forsake you, for He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He entered Bedford jail with Bunyan and comforted his heart. He enabled Paul and Silas to sing his praises at the midnight hour, though their feet were fast in the stocks. He tempered the flames that consumed the martyrs,

and their souls ascended to heaven in a blaze of glory. His love can overleap all the barriers of afflictions, persecutions, circumstances of poverty and distress, and in the dark hours of our life, will be present to cheer and illumine the midnight of the soul. Jesus, precious Saviour, thou art *the home of the soul*. To all who love Him, he has promised an everlasting home in heaven. The homes we have here are very dear, but they cannot last forever. The happy ones, that now, by their presence, make home the scene of every joy, will soon be tenants of the grave, and we shall have a home no longer. But the home on high abides forever. Sicknes and death cannot enter there. The joys laid up in heaven will never be interrupted by the ravages of sin. Our earthly abodes must soon decay and crumble into dust, but that better home shall never fail, for it is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

“Eye hath not seen its sweet employ,
 Ear hath not heard its sweet sounds of joy,
 Earth cannot picture a world so fair,
 Sorrow and death cannot enter there;
 Time does not breathe on its fadeless bloom.
 Beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb,
 Is Heaven with all its joys.”

Is not such a home desirable? But, my impenitent friend, you have no such home as this. You may have a comfortable earthly home and affectionate loved ones there, but if you have not a home in Christ you are a homeless wanderer and a lone orphan in this world. You cannot say, “Our Father,” for you have not given Him your heart. You cannot

sing, "Jesus, Refuge of my soul," for you have not yet fled to Him for safety and protection. If you are yet in your sins Jesus is not your portion. Poor sinner, thou art without a home.

"Sad, sad indeed, must be his lot,
His way, how dark with danger,
Whose hooded eye may never see
The star above the manger."

Seek a home in Christ. Give your heart to Jesus. He says, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "He is rich in mercy toward all that call upon Him." There yet is mercy for you. O, seek his face without delay. A time may come when you would seek Him, but He will not be found. May God forbid that any one who reads these lines, shall ever be heard at the great day of judgment, calling upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon him and hide him from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne; but may the spirit lead you to Jesus now, that at that day, He may place upon your head a crown of gold, and in your hands a harp, tuned to the melodious anthems of the blest. Some of us are almost home. When the pious Baxter lay upon his dying bed, a friend asked him how he felt; he replied, "nearly well, and almost home." Some of us will soon be there. A few more pulsations of our hearts, and they shall beat no more. The heavenly Canaan is just before us. Soon the last battle will be fought, and the Christian soldier shall lay down his arms, and go to that home where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

My soldier friend, will you be there? Are you to-day clothed in the garment of a Saviour's righteousness? Do you hope for pardon through his atoning blood? If so, all will be well? If not, seek the Saviour without delay. Rest not another night until you have made your peace with Him. Throw yourself upon the kind arms of Jesus.

He will save you.

"O, he is full of grace,

And he will ne'er permit,

The soul that fain would seek his face,

To perish at his feet."

May God bless these words to the saving of your souls, is my prayer, for His name's sake.

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